“A Dark Princess from Thailand in Yukio Mishima’s *The Temple of Dawn*: The White Male Japanese Body and its Abject Other”

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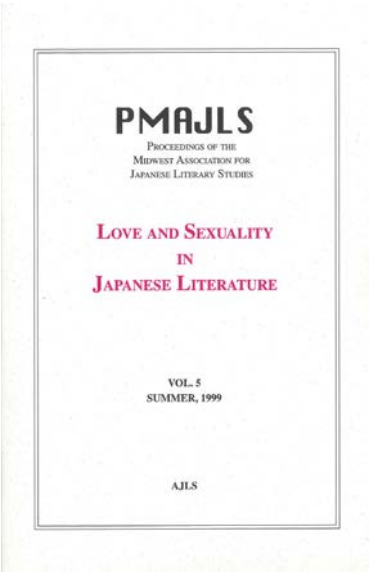
Proceedings of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies 5 (1999): 175–187.



PMAJLS 5:
Love and Sexuality in Japanese Literature.
Ed. Eiji Sekine.

A DARK PRINCESS FROM THAILAND IN YUKIO MISHIMA'S *THE TEMPLE OF DAWN*: THE *WHITE* MALE JAPANESE BODY AND ITS *ABJECT* OTHER[1]

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This paper attempts to contextualize Mishima's political ideology, which is often discussed outside his literary works, and to re-examine the nature of his version of nationalism. Mishima's "ultra-nationalistic" utterances in the sixties rather alienated Japanese intellectuals and the readers of his novels in general, particularly, those who had leftist inclinations. In the seventies the university curriculum would most likely take up *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* [*Kinkakuji*,1956] for their reading list of the contemporary novels. The reason for this phenomenon is, I suspect, that the text was immune to the author's political stance of his later years which was considered to be merely his personal inclination, and therefore of no importance to the modernist value of "high literature."[2] In this sense the academy of Japanese Literature responded to Mishima's nationalism in much the same way as they did to his homosexuality.[3] My reading of Mishima employs a rather different approach.

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[1]Mishima, Yukio. *The Sea of Fertility* [*Hōjō no umi*, 1971.] The page numbers are from the Penguin Books 1985 edition that contains four volumes in one - Vol.1: *Spring Snow* [*Haru no yuki*, 1968]; Vol.2: *Runaway Horses* [*Honba*, 1969]; Vol.3: *The Temple of* Dawn [*Akatsuki no tera*, 1970]; Vol. 4: *The Decay of the Angel* [*Tennin gosui*, 1971.]. My reading of this text utilises postcolonial perspectives and French psychoanalysis. For the notion of abject see Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (trans. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press 1980.) The title of my paper aims to be provocative, and the use of each term—dark / white / male / body / abject / Other—will be examined throughout the paper. The italics and bolds are mine throughout this paper unless otherwise indicated.

[2]The text is not in fact utterly immune to the political issues. The criticism against the American presence in the post-war Japan is interwoven in the text in a paradoxical manner as it is in *Confessions of a Mask* [*Kamen no kokuhaku*, 1949]; that is to say, America fascinates as well as threatens Japan. It also addresses the class issue, which does not get enough attention of the critics owing to their emphasis on Mishima's aesthetic representation. It was written before Mishima began his disturbing public appearances as an ultra-nationalist, or a mock army officer. Therefore, with their modernist efficiency the critics divided the author into the "young M" and the "declining M," as if one had been more credible than the other.

[3]By this I mean that the issue of homosexuality is discussed often outside his texts as one of the biographical interests, and has not been examined as the

In light of French psychoanalysis, namely, Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva, I will examine how his nationalism is constructed and simultaneously deconstructed within his literary work: *The Sea of Fertility* which he completed in the early morning of November 25th 1970: the day Mishima committed his notorious seppuku suicide.[4]

The theme of this tetralogy is reincarnation (See *Table 1*). In Vol. I, which roughly covers the latter half of the Meiji period, a beautiful young aristocrat called Kiyo (Kiyoaki Matsugae) dies at the age of twenty in 1913. The beginning of Vol. I is the description of the Europeanized Japanese imperial court. In an imperial ceremony Kiyo as a young boy appears in service holding the train of the dress of a Japanese princess. The color "white" is used nine times within a two-page-long description of this scene in the Japanese text. There are discourses on colors within Asian cultures: the whiter skin signifies a higher class and sophistication, whereas darkness of skin and hairiness imply crude but sexually more powerful otherness.[5] This hero of the androgynous beauty vividly resonates with that of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*: the book which problematizes gender and the linearity of time.[6] Instead of falling into a deep sleep as Orlando does before turning into the next role, Kiyo falls ill and dies

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textual analysis of his gender representation. Even with those texts that apparently deal with homosexuality such as *Confessions of a Mask* and *The Forbidden Colors* [*Kinjiki*, 1953] critiques are written from a heterosexual perspective, and therefore how homoerotic desire operates in the narratives is left unexamined.

[4]Some argues that Mishima had actually finished writing the final volume much earlier than the day of action. Since the biographical facts are of no interests here, I am taking the date on the original manuscript as the completion date.

[5]The colors: white (snow); black (dogs / footsteps on snow); red (blood / fire / the sun) are significant in Mishima's writings. They each represent certain values. However, it is important to note that the colors only exist in representation as a code of demarcation. Therefore, when Mishima uses the ideograph, white, it is his demarcation of a certain utopian entity whose boundaries are unstable otherwise.

[6]Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando* (London: The Hogarth Press 1928.) Woolf dedicates this book to Vita Sackville-West, her life-long love. The protagonist is a beautiful and young British aristocrat who experiences temporal, spatial, and gender changes without altering the identity. The fact that the book is subtitled as a "biography" undermines the narrative convention of modern literature and stands out from Woolf's other novels which diligently trace their characters' interiority. It is interesting to note that *Orlando* was also excluded from the seventies university curriculum in Japanese academy of English Literature despite the fact that Woolf's works were one of the major study subjects at the time.

after the heartbreak of a passionate love affair at the age of twenty. His lover is a woman of the higher rank who is betrothed to the Emperor's son. The hero's breaking of the taboo is rather celebrated in the narrative as part of his decadent nature. This somehow contradicts Mishima's political stance, if one takes him to be a royalist as he is frequently mistaken for. The text is full of nostalgia[7] for the peculiarly Westernized culture of the Japanese aristocrats which is soon to be lost by the military uprising from the twenties onwards.

In Vol. II another young man called Isao (Isao Iinuma) kills himself by seppuku suicide at the age of twenty like the first hero. He is a royalist and ultra-nationalist whose ideology originates in the *pure* Samurai spirit: the ultimate loyalty to the lord who, in this case, is the Emperor. The "white lilies" used in one of Shinto rituals are frequently related to the hero in the text.[8] Isao's death comes after his naive attempt at a *coup d état*, which, of course, reminds us of Mishima's own death. Mishima was preparing for his own "*coup d'état*" at the time of writing of this novel. He formed a private army, wore a flashy uniform, and was calling for Japan's autonomy against American cultural and spiritual colonization.

If military elements are at the other end of the aristocratic aesthetic of sophistication and decadence, moving from Vol. I to II seems to narrate Mishima's own conversion from aristocratic tastes to his new religion—swordsman-ship and warrior spirit: it is a shift from the feminine *ennui* to the disciplined masculinity (In either case, it is embodied in a young *male* body). Therefore, two separate values of two separate classes are endorsed in the first two volumes, which can be read as Mishima's autobiography as well as his narrativization of Japan's history.[9] Yoshi-

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[7]While nostalgia is a discourse on which one's ideology is unmistakably marked, no narrativization (or signification) can escape latent ideology of the speaking subject. Therefore, it becomes crucial for us to pay attention to how that visibility (of the author's ideology) is placed to work within the text.

[8]Strong nostalgia is also at work in Vol. II that contains another key text within the text. The amazingly "innocent and pure" young hero reads and re-enacts "The story of Jinpūren"; Jinpūren, a group of Royalists in Kyushu many of whom were Shinto priests and from the former Samurai class, rose up against the Meiji government in 1876 just before Seinan Civil War. The fact that Mishima presents this hero as a copy of the heroes of the past, and not as an authentic unique hero is significant for my later argument.

[9]Mihisma's earlier works mostly feature the privileged-class settings which he was familiar with from his upbringing. When he began body-building and moved on to martial arts, his tastes for worriers, from Samurai to soldiers, set in. Akiyuki Nosaka in *Kakuyakutaru gyakkō* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū 1987) relates these two elements to Mishima's notoriously aristocratic grandmother

moto Ryumei points out that the first elements come from Ancient Korea and the latter from Ancient China.[10] Yoshimoto's intention in saying so is no doubt to prostrate Mishima's advocacy of right-wing politics. But my argument is that the tetralogy itself is already structured to destabilise any monolithic ideology, not to mention ultra-nationalism. This paper will examine Vol. III, *The Temple of Dawn*, that categorically captures the moment of such destabilization. Although I have mentioned the shift from feminine to masculine, these seemingly opposite values should not be understood in essentialist terms. Mishima's gender attribution is always more problematic than conventional, as we will witness below.

The person who holds the four stories together is called Honda (Shigekuni Honda) who was a law student and close friend of Kiyo in Vol. I. He was a lawyer who defends Isao at criminal court, having realized that Isao was the embodiment of Kiyo's reincarnation. In Vol. III Honda is now a successful corporate lawyer who travels to Thailand and India just before the war breaks out. *The Temple of Dawn* begins with the description of the city of Bangkok. It is situated less than six feet above sea level, and the roads are constructed by piling up the dirt: "—[these] canals run in every direction, all flowing into the mother waters of the Mae Nam, gleaming the same *brown* as that of the inhabitants' *skin*." The first rays of dawn create an abundance of *colors*: "Even the *luminous skin* of a leprous beggar glows in the shade" (499). By creating such a landscape the text enhances the contrast between Thailand and Japan.

> —the national spirit [of Japan] in its *original* state was of *pristine whiteness*. Travelling through a country like Thailand, Honda realized more clearly than ever the *simplicity* and *purity* of things Japanese. (512)

Honda studies the wide range of Buddhist teachings in regards to transmigration. The earlier teachings: Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism that had incorporated Hindu and Greek mythology spread all over South-

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and the relatively weak presence of his grandfather whose side of the family had strove to obtain the Samurai class status.

[10]See Yoshimoto's article in *Bungei dokuhon—Mishima Yukio*. (Tokyo: Kawadeshobō Shinsha 1975.): "What Mishima considered as 'things Japanese,' 'things elegant,' and 'things aesthetic' are merely what is ancient Korean. By the same token, the idea which Mishima considered as the 'elements of Samurai' stems from ancient China. This misconception evokes pity in us. There did not exist 'things Japanese' anywhere in his sight. And yet he believed in 'things Japanese.' Is it not sad?"(Translation is mine).

East Asia to form part of its culture. Mishima seems to give precedence to these southern bound teachings as the *archaic maternal authority* (Kristeva) over the northern bound, more sophisticated teachings which reached Japan in later years. While the southern Buddhism is designed to give salvation to all human kinds, the northern Buddhism focuses on the emancipation of an individual inner self. The transition of Buddhism from Central Asia to Japan is described as: "It is as though the *muddy waters* of the Mae Nam were to be *filtered* through a sieve of *white silk*" (513). There is a paragraph blatantly stating Honda's pre-war ideology.

> Japan was to be married, not to Hitler, but to the German forests; not to Mussolini, but to the Roman pantheon. It was a pact joining German, Roman, and Japanese mythology: a friendship among the *beautiful, masculine, pagan* gods of East and West. (509)

An extraordinary statement, somehow desperately gendered, conspicuously revealing *his* homoerotic desire. Interestingly enough, these paragraphs are placed in the midst of the landscape of Thailand. *His* white masculine Japan can claim to be an autonomous modern subject, only when it breaks away from the archaic authority—the dark Asian mother.[11]

When Honda's journey reaches Benarez in India, the narrativization of Asia as the *abject other* becomes undeniable. If the otherness as such is constructed in Mishima's text in order to secure the space of the self, is it valid for us to define that we are reading here an Imperialist discourse in a colonial text? As the story unfolds itself, however, this definition becomes unsustainable.[12] In Bangkok Honda meets a "mad" little princess

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[11]The narrative describes Honda's perception of Asia is too emotional to confine its attribution to Honda alone. By the term "his," I mean more of the author's than the protagonist's.

[12]The self/other mapping drawn by the narrative by no means provides security to the divided territories. The self (man / Japan) encounters the other (woman / Asia) only to find *her* within himself. The following monologue of Honda's manifests that the otherness he found in Asia was what Japan had originally possessed and was now deprived of: ". . . the Japanese, when the nation had embraced a new culture and ethic at the end of the last century, turned their efforts to eliminating the barbaric customs of preceding generations. As a result, the unadulterated national spirit was subordinated, its energy erupting from time to time in explosions of violence which repelled and alienated the people even more"(512).

The "unadulterated national spirit" is paradoxically defined as barbaric, explosive, and violent, which alienates the contemporary Japanese. It is something that Japan discarded through its Westernization during the Meiji period

who claims herself to be the reincarnate of Isao in Vol. II.[13] She is Yin Chan [jin jan], Princess Moonlight, a daughter of a Thai prince who was a visiting student in Vol. I. When Yin Chan reappears in post-war Japan, she is now a woman with the seductive body. She is oblivious of her earlier claim, and becomes the object of both male and female desire. To see her naked body becomes Honda's obsession. He *must* see the sign of genuineness: three moles on the left side of the body. Seeing the sign is for Honda knowing the unseeable phenomenon of transmigration. Seeing the absence of the sign is also knowing that the phenomenon is merely his illusion. The awareness of his own exclusion from the delightful circuit of transmigrating nobility can only be compensated by becoming the sole gazer of the phenomenon.

A carefully prepared peep-hole in a bookcase is set behind German law books, which had been handed down from his father: which suggests the inheritance of the patriarchal law—reason and logos. He knows the exact weight of each volume and the odour of accumulated dust. Removing them from the shelf is described as removing the "*stone walls of concepts*" and as transforming the "grim pleasure" of reading them into his "*wretched* infatuation" (682). Please note that at this particular point of "wretchedness" Mishima uses the metaphor of a Shinto priest engaging himself with ritual.[14] His transgression undermines the previous rhetoric of "purity and simplicity of things Japanese."

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and that one now finds unfamiliar (as the other.) Mishima's narrative is capable of embracing the scenery of Benarez which is distressingly barbaric and abhorrent to the eyes of the moderns. What the narrative is actually denouncing has to be the newly introduced Western value system that eliminates things illogical/mythical, unproductive, unhygienic, inefficient, and most of all, thing bodily. It is not surprising that body haunts and sexuality dominates the text.

[13]The little Yin Chan's articulation is socially unacceptable, and therefore regarded as "madness." Honda is the only person who understands her signification. But instead of responding to it, he observes her body and finds his own libidinal urge. Now that the object of his desire is of the female sex and colonized other, it is safe and legitimate for him to speak of his love that could not speak its name earlier. Therefore, it is predictable that the adult Yin Chan is deprived of language, and that her appearance is structured like the unconscious; she is real, but outside the consciousness.

[14]Mishima specifies this to be the Shinto ritual in the original text: "He was a lone [Shinto] priest left in the darkness. Strictly adhering to the ceremonial procedures long rehearsed in his head . . ." (682). While he relates voyeurism to the Shinto ritual as above, he also uses the expression, "the probity of Shinto rites" to describe "things Japanese." Such contradiction in one narrative can be only explained if we were to understand either voyeurism to be as sacred as religion, or Shintoism to be as profane as voyeurism.

What Honda sees through the peep-hole is a spectacle of two naked female bodies making love. The moment of seeing becomes the moment of revelation by which he confirms Yin Chan's authenticity: she was the genuine reincarnate with three moles on the side, and by which he also confirms that the object of his desire is not attainable. His desire is twice denied; firstly, she is a lesbian who resists his heterosexual gaze. And secondly, if she *is* now reincarnated Kiyo, Honda's love cannot speak its name. Yin Chan's exotic dark body is a stark contrast to Kiyo's white male body of feminine beauty in Vol. I. Her body is an undisciplined, liberated body in contrast with the strictly formalized body of a swordsman in Vol. II. Her presence is disturbing and unsettling. She is now confirmed to be the "authentic" reincarnate. Then, how can the "transmigrating white substance" remain noble and pure without being contaminated and defiled in her dark body? Who is she?

One of Honda's *obscene* dreams describes her flying astride a peacock, naked and urinating above. This image doubles with the Peacock Wisdom King of an esoteric Buddhism. The original of this Peacock King is an Indian Goddess *Kali* who is described in the text as "her sublimity as mother, her feminine voluptuousness, and her abominable cruelty."

> . . . her body is black, and her mouth is red with blood. . . . her neck is adorned with a necklace of human skulls and freshly severed heads. . . . This bloodthirsty goddess brings epidemics and calamities as soon as she feels thirst, . . . (528)

If Yin Chan is Goddess Kali, she *is* the monstrous feminine / the archaic mother. Abjection in Kristevan terms seduces and engulfs the modern subject who has his imaginary, clear-cut boundaries around him, believing in his clean and unified self. However, the Peacock Wisdom King [Kujaku myō ō,] has now a "compassionate countenance" and an "extremely *fair*" body. During the Heian period (ninth- and tenth- centuries) this beautiful white male god was thought to protect people against natural calamities (580). A "sieve of white silk" must have worked in this process of filtering again!

Yin Chan is a *body* that appears, makes love, and disappears. She is a white benevolent *male* god as well as a dark and fierce man-eating goddess. Her body is a heterogeneous space—the locus of negotiation between feminine and masculine, black and white, and Asia and Japan. The effect of her body in the text is therefore an agent which breaks down the self-other polarity. In one sense Yin Chan represents the *colonizable*

Asian other in opposition to the colonial Japanese self, but in another, she is elusive and impossible to colonize. If I borrow Homi Bhabha's description of the colonized subject, she occupies the place: "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite," in relation to her preceding Japanese male heroes, and I use the expression to make a positive statement.[15] Yin Chan's body gives Honda the opportunity to recognize his desire which would otherwise remain in the unconscious. Her role is a position of the Lacanian *Other* that signifies and mediates, rather than of the *other* through which the subject receives satisfaction.

Lacan uses the formulaic expression, the *objet a*, to represent the object providing satisfaction; it is the cause of desire which has a *metonymic* mechanism.

> The *objet a* is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ. This serves as a symbol of the lack, that is to say, of the phallus, not as much, but insofar as it is lacking. It must, therefore, be an object that is, firstly separable, and secondly, that has some relation to the lack. (Lacan, 1977b, 103)

Honda's gaze is that of Lacan's and what Honda wishes to see through Yin Chan's body is the *objet a* which is supposed to return his gaze. The four heroes Mishima creates in *The Sea of Fertility* are separated from Mishima as organs (therefore, they represent what Mishima lacks), and they are *metonymically* replaced one after another.

> . . . what he[the subject] is trying to see, make no mistake, is the object as absence. What the voyeur is looking for and finds is merely a shadow, . . . What he is looking for is not . . . the phallus . . . but precisely its absence. (Ibid. 182-3)

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[15]Homi Bhabha quotes this from Samuel Weber in "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." October, 1984 spring, 125-33. Bhabha defines that mimicry is a mode of colonial discourse that produces slippage, excess, and difference. Yin Chan is legitimate as a hero but not quite so in a sense that there is more to her character. Mishima's initial project aimed at the *feminine* beauty for Vol. 1, the masculine beauty for Vol. 2, and the exotic beauty for Vol. 3. As many critics point out, there seemed to have occurred a certain significant change of his plan in due course. My assumption is that it happened in Vol. 3 when Mishima had to write the moment of the subject's encounter with the exotic other. Therefore, Yin Chan is more than her proceeding heroes, and her position is a privileged one.

Note that the Lacanian gaze should not be confused with that of Sartre's. While Sartre focuses on the two positions: the observer (the self) and the observed (the other). The importance of Lacan's argument lies in the introduction of the third position, the Other. Elizabeth Grosz explains it in the following paragraph.

> Sexuality is thus the privileged field in which desire is played out. Desire always refers to a triangle—the subject, the other and the Other. The other is the object through whom desire is returned to the subject; the Other is the locus of signification which regulates the movement by which this return is made possible. The subject's desire is always the desire of the Other. (Grosz, 1990, 80)

The tetralogy is a story of desire: how a subject (Honda) is gradually persuaded by the attraction of the *objet a* which is metonymically replaced by Kiyo, Isao, Yin Chan, and the forth hero (Tōru) and eventually makes him realise the absence of the Phallus—the transcendental signifier. Yin Chan's body is the *Other* that motivates and regulates the subject's desire.

We notice that the narrative shifts from the highly rhetorical "Mishima-esque" style to that of pornography. It is telling us that something beautiful is getting corroded away. And it takes place coincidentally right after the war as the American brand of new modernization proceeds in Japan.(See *Table 1*) In order to narrativize Japan as a young male subject the text has to depend on a heterosexual discourse and allows its narrative to fall into the Freudian Oedipal structure. This inevitably disempowers the position of Son who is under the castration threat. He (Japan) wants to be Mother (Asia) who is the object of Father's (America's) desire. But with castration fear he can never become her.

Lacan reads the Freudian "paternal metaphor" differently. He suggests that the Phallus is the transcendental signifier that only signifies the lack, or absence, and that the symbolic father / the *Other* is a position that mediates Son's entry to language / the symbolic order. Yin Chan does not speak. She is the reincarnate of Mishima's young male Japanese heroes none of whom indeed *spoke* their own stories; they are subjected to the narratives and never allowed to be the subjects of their own. She does not recognize the imaginary father (the *other*) nor the symbolic father (the *Other*). There is the "purloined emerald ring" in the text that circulates through different ownership which originates in Thailand. Honda takes great pain to make sure it arrives at its destination—Yin Chan. But she

does not recognize the meaning of it. It does not signify to her. She leaves it behind in the burning house.[16]

Yin Chan does not return Honda's gaze, neither does Kiyo nor Isao. They remain in the *imaginary* without entering into the domain of language where they could establish themselves as *speaking subjects* (Lacan). They are Mishima's heroes precisely because of their inability to speak and see. Knowledge is concealed from them and they die without knowing, whereas Honda (as well as the reader) outlives them to know. Honda does speak, and acknowledges himself to be the *overseer* of Kiyo's transmigration. But he becomes powerless exactly at the moment he *over-sees*. The object of the gaze incessantly slips away from the gaze. The moment he confirms transmigration, Honda is excluded forever from its circuit. We as readers, on the other hand, also lose our privileged gaze, when the exposure of the voyeur in the text disables our identification with Honda's gaze. Like Honda, we are told that reincarnation is taking place, and yet we are not able to see it.

Through Honda's knowledge the repressed existence of Kiyo, Isao, and Yin Chan once emerged from the historical unconscious only to be buried away for the second time. Honda will struggle to revive them through the fourth hero in Vol. IV, which will only make him realize his inability to let the hero speak. Honda fails to articulate any existence of a *speaking subject* at all including himself and us (the moderns). *The Sea of Fertility*, as we have seen, problematizes the notion of *gaze* which facilitates novels as a genre, and thereby questions modernity itself. In fact the pre-modern theme of transmigration is utilized in this novel in order to thematize the position of the gaze; seeing and knowing that inevitably bring up the issue of the modern subject. Novels are an art form specific to modernity, in which the modern subject is constructed to be the one with interiority. Unlike poetry, drama, or epics, novels interact with a private self who would read them in a private space. The nature of the genre is a voyeuristic one: peeping through a hole at the other's interior without risking the immediate exposure of the voyeur's own identity.

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[16]Lacan's reading of Freud elucidates this "paternal metaphor" in *Ecrits. A Selection* (London: Travistock 1977a.) For the Lacanian "gaze" *see The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* (London: The Hogarth Press 1977b.) Elizabeth Grosz in her *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin 1990) elaborates on both accounts. By "the purloined emerald ring" I am referring to Lacan's 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"' (Yale French Studies 48.) As the letter circulates without revealing its content in Poe's story, the ring in Mishima's text becomes an empty sign in Vol. III.

Honda appoints an insignificant character to be the seducer of Yin Chan. And this playboy figure instantly sees her as a typical colonizable other: "I've always been taken by *dark*, *petite*, and glamorous types that *can't talk Japanese* very well. How shall I say? . . . I probably have somewhat peculiar tastes"(625). The comment repels Honda who is confused by his own desire which bears the same colonialist's nature as well as that of a faithful follower to the unknown. Yin Chan dies at the age of twenty, bitten by a poisonous snake in Thailand. Her twin sister who studies in Switzerland and marries an *American* diplomat, happily lives on. In this context Yin Chan becomes an *excess* to the genealogical tree of Thai royals, just like each hero in Vol. I and II who did not become a hero par excellence but an *excess* to the linear narrative of Japanese history. Mishima's desire to encapsulate the essence of *real* Japan seems to find no way out other than re-inscribing each *excess* which has been lost in the efficiency of modernity, heterosexuality, and Western metaphysics. The structure of *The Sea of Fertility* destabilizes the seemingly clear boundaries of geographical space, heterosexual mapping, and any monolithic ideology including his widely accepted right-wing politics. The modernist value of an "authentic subject" is undermined from the beginning of the text by its pre-modern framework of the transmigrating "noble seed" which is not even a substance, according to a Buddhist canon.[17]

The Temple of Dawn contains the exhaustive discussion of Buddhist theory development. This gives the misleading impression that the Buddhist philosophy is placed against Western metaphysics in order to dominate the latter. If that is the case, Mishima is writing to live up to the Western expectation for him to be the *Orient*. While it is true that he had a spirit of an entertainer (in fact, he may have been the ultimate entertainer), the excessive amount of mythical/philosophical talk sounds mishmash to the ears of the moderns: not only of the Westerners but also of the Japanese. Making sincere arguments over the mythical system of reincarnation would not effectively overcome the Western modern thought. Nevertheless, the detailed discussion of the Buddhist can-

[17]The following are presented as Honda's conclusion with regards to the teaching of Yuishiki school and the concept of "seeds": "Implanting the seeds into the consciousness is called 'perfuming', in a manner similar to the way incense permeates clothing, the process being referred to *as shuji kunju*, or 'seed perfuming'" (567, the original italics); "The world is born and dies at every instant, and on each momentary cross section appear three forms of endless births and deaths. One is 'seeds producing the present world', then 'the present world "perfuming" the seeds', and last, 'seeds producing seeds' . . . The second shows the present world being 'perfumed' by *alaya* seeds and becoming future phenomena" (571, the original italics).

ons/*texts* can convey the sense of a *law* that had been inscribed, and therefore, claims its validity with which Mishima can now validate his story of the noble seeds.

There is another *law/text* utilized to validate his story—Kiyo's dream diary: the text that Honda believes to hold the "truth." It guides him all along to the series of reincarnates. But again pinning down the meaning is impossible because one can never be sure whether the text inscribes Kiyo's "authentic" *unconscious*, or it instead signifies the desire of Honda who reads it. Although the tetralogy operates outside the *truth discourse*, Mishima had to introduce these authorial texts in order to legitimize his anti-modern narrative.

Mishima reproduces authentic heroes copy after copy. When there are no more textual heroes left, he uses his own body to reproduce another copy. And at the end we realize: there is no such thing as the original. Mishima does not suggest that meaning (or the unconscious) is somewhere deeply hidden in the texts. It is there on the surface but we simply do not see it, as the moment of seeing is the moment of our own exclusion. Although the characteristics of postmodernity such as pastiche, nostalgia, and reproduction are all evident in *The Sea of Fertility*, I am still hesitant to use the word *postmodern* to describe it lest the term should connote "aloofness." Mishima could be playful but never aloof with what he writes. He is no exception in being fettered by modernity that saturates our time.

He had started his career by creating an *emblematic modern man* in *Confessions of a Mask*, and ended by signing "him" out in *The Sea of Fertility*. Whether the move he made was returning home to the "premodern," or heading further to the "postmodern" is not certain. What can be deduced at least from the tetralogy through the analysis of its structure is that he was not attempting to turn the clock backwards. The decadent beauty of Vol. I is negated by Vol. II. The Samurai spirit of Vol. II is also belittled by Vol. III. Each of them is idealized but none are utopianized enough to survive his harsh treatment of the last volume. The dramatic rift of his narrative at the beginning of the post-war era marks the American cultural invasion. However, decolonizing Japan from America cannot promise its liberation from modernity that has deeper roots into our thought. Mishima's self-fashioning nationalism and his becoming swordsmanship may be one way of decentering the modern subject to obtain freedom. *The Temple of Dawn*, is the key text which proves the inadequacy of the modernist reading and manifests the great divide between modernity and its unconscious.

TABLE 1

THE STRUCTURE OF THE TETRALOGY
THE SEA OF FERTILITY

	Time	Japanese context	transmigrating body	observer Honda	author Mishima
1	1893 – 1913	Westernization	**Kiyo**: an aristocrat dies at 20	law student, friend of Kiyo age: 20	
22	1913 – 1933	military uprising "red-hunting"	**Isao**: a royalist dies at 20	defending lawyer for Isao age: 40	
33	1940 – 1945	pre-war	**Yin Chan**: a little Thai princess	corporate lawyer, visiting Thailand age: 46	law student
33	1945 – 1953	post-war Americanization	**Yin Chan**: a grown princess, student dies at 20	millionaire, voyeur age: 59	novelist career begins at 20
44	1970 – 1973	New-left student movement	**Tōru**: a fake reincarnate, survives after 20	retired old man, voyeur, survivor, age: 80	seppuku suicide at 45 (1970)